United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.7

# General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first session

## First Committee

7th Meeting
Friday, 18 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

*Chairman:* Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou ..... (Belarus)

*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Agenda items 60 to 81** *(continued)*

**General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items**

**Mr. Camacho Omiste** (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of the First Committee. Your professional experience and personal qualities will ensure that our work will achieve positive and concrete results. I assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full cooperation. Your election is a sign that the international community recognizes the efforts and contributions that your country, Belarus, has made to disarmament and to security throughout the world and, in particular, in Central Europe. I should like also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for his skilful guidance of our Committee's work during its previous session.

The Second World War gave rise to a call for a new system of collective security and policies to promote peace and cooperation among the peoples of the world. Thus was born the United Nations. However, the explosion of the atom bomb, before the Charter of this Organization had entered into force, altered the foundation on which this system of international relations was built. Until the end of the cold war, nuclear weapons were at the heart of power politics, affecting the principle of legal equality among States and giving rise to the arms race.

Changes in international relations are beginning to bear fruit in various areas. My delegation is pleased that during the past year the international community has taken two essential steps to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons. One was the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, and the other the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These are both historic documents that establish commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The adoption of the Treaty of Bangkok, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, was equally encouraging. This instrument of great legal and political importance is a part of the efforts under way in other regions. The treaties of Tlateloco for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rarotonga for the South Pacific, Pelindaba for Africa, and Bangkok for South-East Asia — being almost in full effect — together with the Antarctic Treaty, reinforce the concept of the nuclear-weapon-free zone. Internationally recognized and established on the basis of freely entered into arrangements, these zones contribute to world and regional peace and security. We believe that the discussions and work of this Committee should take these positive developments into account and reflect them in the Committee's resolutions. In this context, my delegation supports the initiative of Brazil to ensure that the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This would have a positive effect on tension-prone regions such as the Middle East, and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime.

Similarly, we welcome the direct negotiations on nuclear disarmament held in the context of the Strategic

96-86558 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I and SALT II). We hope for the resumption of multilateral negotiations on making progress towards a convention banning the production of fissile material. We believe that the complete and definitive elimination of nuclear weapons is now more attainable and constitutes a priority for the international community. In this conviction, my country supports the programme of gradual nuclear disarmament proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement and other neutral States to the Conference on Disarmament, which will be submitted to this Committee.

The constructive progress we are witnessing in the area of nuclear disarmament should be accompanied by concrete measures with regard to conventional weapons. The indiscriminate use of such weapons and the lack of established legal systems governing their prohibition, limitation and trading, give conventional weapons a devastating and pernicious influence.

The continued manufacture and laying of landmines is also of concern. This situation calls for urgent legal and humanitarian measures to establish a comprehensive global legal system banning all kinds of anti-personnel mines and to allay the pain and suffering caused to innocent civilians by the mines, which impede the social and economic activities of these peoples. My country will continue this year to cosponsor the draft resolution calling on States to adopt an international agreement banning the use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

In the area of weapons of mass destruction, we hope that the countries with the largest stocks of chemical weapons will ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, allowing that legal instrument to enter into force and encouraging its universal adherence.

Dialogue and multilateral negotiation have made it possible for us to codify substantive rules binding on our States in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. For this reason, Bolivia believes that peace and international security, as well as cooperation for social and economic development of peoples, should be approached from a global perspective and with a sense of shared responsibility. Comprehensive approaches must be supplemented by sustained regional efforts. In this connection, we would like to encourage the formulation of regional disarmament plans, as they can play a role in collective security and would promote confidence-building measures, which would in turn help eliminate distrust among countries in a region.

We call for a genuine democratization of international relations and for the earmarking of greater resources for policies promoting peace and development. It seems paradoxical, however, to promote globalization and interdependence in various areas of human activity, particularly in the economic and trade spheres, while our conceptions of security and military activities continue to have a negative impact on relations of cooperation and mutual respect.

The arms race, fuelled by increasing ideological differences, became an obstacle to the development of a better world. This was the situation during most of the first 50 years of our Organization's life. With the end of the cold war, the global balance of power has changed. For that reason, we must encourage, with renewed faith and conviction, the beginning of a new race, this time for disarmament. This could be the most important legacy the end of this century could leave to the generations of the next millennium.

**Mr. Sannikau** (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): It gives me particular pleasure, Sir, to welcome a representative of my country as Chairman of the First Committee. Your election to this authoritative post is proof of the international recognition of Belarus' contribution to the promotion of international security and disarmament. While associating myself with other congratulations made to you, allow me to assure, through you, all delegations that Belarus intends constructively to approach all the items on the First Committee's agenda in order to facilitate the achievement of consensus decisions, with the goal of meeting the requirements of the disarmament process in all its aspects.

Aware of the vital need to develop and implement international mechanisms for strengthening security that would also effectively ensure national security, the Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the United Nations role as a guarantor of the efficiency and multilateral character of such mechanisms. The opening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature was a major event which preceded the current session of the General Assembly and will have an impact on the First Committee's deliberations this year. The Foreign Minister of my country signed the Treaty on the very first day: 24 September 1996. Here I should like to underscore Belarus' fully-fledged involvement in finalizing the work on the Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament. It is in that capacity that we intend to bring to the Conference on Disarmament, the authoritative negotiating body, our experience — that of a young State that has,

nonetheless, resolved complex security and disarmament issues.

The Conference on Disarmament today is faced with the task of consolidating and further developing the nuclear-disarmament process. High priorities in this area include the early commencement of negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons, and the speedy drafting of an internationally binding instrument on both negative and positive security assurances from nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States regarding the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The first step in that direction was taken by the five nuclear Powers in their statements on security guarantees to the non-nuclear-weapon States in the context of the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 984 (1995). Consistent efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce global nuclear armaments are an important prerequisite to enhancing the positive impact and potential of all endeavours to that end.

The creation of nuclear weapon-free zones is making a significant contribution to strengthening peace and security. With the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty and the accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the corresponding protocols, the entire southern hemisphere is becoming a unified nuclear-weapon-free zone. The presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 12 April last in connection with the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty is a positive signal from the United Nations body that has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That statement encourages the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and urges the countries of the northern hemisphere to take similar steps. Under the circumstances, as was noted by the head of my delegation in his statement during the general debate in plenary:

> "we consider it illogical for Europe to remain the only continent where no practical steps have been taken in this direction." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 18th meeting, p. 19)*

Belarus, Kazakstan and Ukraine, which until recently had 3,400 nuclear missiles stationed on their territory, are making an important contribution — highly commended by the international community — to the process of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The last strategic nuclear missiles will be removed from the territory of Belarus by the end of this year, thus freeing the entire area of Central and Eastern Europe from this type of weapons.

Given the new realities in the ever-evolving architecture of European security, an important and relevant initiative, which previous speakers have referred to, was that taken by the President of Belarus to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in the European region. The aims of creating such a space could be formulated as follows: to contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament; to avoid the recurrence of nuclear confrontation in Europe; to introduce a unifying element of stability and security for the countries of the region, which have different perspectives on the structure of pan-European security systems; to consolidate the existing commitments of States of the region to become non-nuclear-weapon States; to prevent the possibility of renewed proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region; and to build confidence among the States of the region. The term that we have selected — "space" — is intended to make the idea of nuclear-weapon-free status in the centre of Europe flexible and to invite potential participants and interested States to discuss the foundations for its realization.

We believe that the nuclear-weapon-free space could be based on a coherent and harmonious combination of legal and political, unilateral and multilateral commitments by States. The parties to the space could include both our closest neighbours, which see membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the solution to their security problems, as well as those countries with nuclear-weapon-free traditions and neutral States. The NATO States that have a specific stand on the alliance's nuclear weapons might also become part of that space, in one form or another.

Besides measures related to nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon-free space might involve such elements as regional efforts to prevent illicit traffic in fissile materials and to improve the reliability and safety of atomic-energy installations. The nuclear-weapon-free space could also give its participants the option to commit themselves not to take any steps related to conventional weapons or to military activities that might provoke nuclear retaliation.

I should like to emphasize that the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free space cannot be perceived in a simplistic manner, as a measure to counter plans for NATO's expansion. Belarus' initiative is not intended to block anything; rather, it aims to seek solutions in the context of creating a pan-European security system, taking into account the interests of all European countries and security arrangements.

In this context, the proposal to limit the deployment of nuclear weapons outside the borders of the nuclear States is extremely important. We also attach particular significance to the Partnership for Peace, in which Belarus has begun to participate more directly and intends to participate more fully in the future.

It should be noted that delegations have unanimously welcomed the ratification by 64 States, including Belarus, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We ratified the Convention in February 1995 and this July deposited its instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We attach great importance to practical measures to strengthen the regime of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We have presented our proposals on increasing the effectiveness of the Convention at its Review Conferences and are satisfied that our position has been reflected in their final resolutions.

Belarus supports the further development of international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space. Unfortunately, the experience gathered by Belarus' specialists in this sphere remains untapped, awaiting proper application in the framework of international cooperation.

The results of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Review Conference are of great importance for furthering control procedures over conventional arms, and for increased transparency and confidence-building. It is common knowledge that Belarus has come up against serious problems, particularly economic, in fulfilling its obligations under the Treaty. I am very pleased to announce that despite those difficulties and the lack of adequate assistance, the Republic has fulfilled all its obligations on conventional arms reduction under the Treaty. We are looking forward to an early start of negotiations to adapt this Treaty to new realities, so that States parties to the Treaty can sketch out mutually acceptable decisions before the next summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is convened in Lisbon.

The results of the Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects might help recent international efforts. I should like to report, with satisfaction, that we have just been notified that the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus has ratified the Convention's Protocol II on landmines and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. In addition, the moratorium until the end of 1997 on the export of anti-personnel landmines, declared by the President of Belarus, remains in force.

We support the important new item on the agenda of the First Committee on the ecological aspects of disarmament. This issue is particularly topical for countries in which military bases are being closed down and intensive arms reduction and conversion measures are being taken with respect to military production. We have already had the opportunity to express our support for the idea of including provisions on crimes related to causing deliberate and serious damage to the environment in the draft code of crimes against peace and security.

All these and other, similar major initiatives are opening the way to further efforts in micro-disarmament, including those to halt illicit trafficking in small arms, especially in conflict zones. We are contributing to the drafting of recommendations on small arms by taking part in the Panel of Governmental Experts established at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Traditionally, Belarus, along with a host of other countries, supports the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and related systems. This item is on the agenda of the current session. We intend to submit a draft resolution on this item, which we hope will be adopted by consensus.

This year has become a landmark in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation, and the further strengthening of international security. I wish to express our confidence that deliberations in the First Committee and the decisions adopted will help us keep the momentum going. The delegation of Belarus is prepared to contribute in every possible way.

**Mr. Kadrakounov** (Kyrgyzstan): Mr. Chairman, as this is my first intervention, allow me to congratulate you on your election to preside over the First Committee. We are confident that your wise leadership and the assistance of the other members of the Bureau will advance the work of the Committee this session. Kyrgyzstan wishes to assure you of its whole-hearted support in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

Our Republic is located in Central Asia, in the region that lies at the crossroads of the millennial civilizations linking Asia with Europe. In addition to existing States, this region includes the five newly independent Republics of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Their emergence has created new geo-political realities, which have a number of peculiar features. They all are land-locked countries. Despite its background and civilization, Central Asia is faced with enormous difficulties in its transitional period. A series of political and cultural identities have been imposed and superimposed on each other in the region, the last two being Islam and Marxism. But the main specific feature is that all these Republics are in the process of building a State, and therefore give the highest priority to the issues of peace, security and stability in their domestic and foreign policies, because only with these basic conditions is sustainable economic and social development possible.

Kyrgyzstan, as already mentioned, is located at the very heart of the Eurasian continent, surrounded by countries with nuclear potential, and right between two world-famous nuclear-testing grounds: Semipalatinsk in Kazakstan, which is no longer operational, and Lop Nor in China. All the possible consequences of testing and its by-products were literally falling on the heads of our population and its land, leaving in their wake despair and human tragedy. For these reasons, the Republic's authorities had no doubts about joining either the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). These are truly historic events that have increased the momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

Two other matters remain on the nuclear-arms-control agenda: negotiations on a convention to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices; and further reductions of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their global elimination. It must be pointed out that the conclusion of the CTBT proves the ability of the United Nations to follow through on the promises it made last year at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It also raises expectations that the other two matters I mentioned can be resolved accordingly.

It is widely recognized that the most prevalent menace since the end of the cold war is that posed by civil wars and local and regional conflicts. For our Republic this is a grim reality. Conflicts in the neighbouring countries of Tajikistan and Afghanistan have led to the extreme suffering of their peoples and created new threats to stability in the region, one of the most important of which is illicit trafficking in light weapons. This increasingly global phenomenon has an impact on States' domestic stability and on regional conflicts.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan supports international and regional attempts to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms. It recognizes the need for the close cooperation of Member States to curb trafficking in illicit arms as an effective contribution to the enhancement of regional and international peace and security. We welcome the negotiations under way to devise a framework for conventional arms control and the reduction of armaments into the twenty-first century. It is encouraging that progress has also been made in setting up a new arrangement on export controls for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies. The significant headway made in these matters shows that arms control is by no means a secondary issue on the security agenda.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the progress achieved in seeking a political solution to the conflict in Nagorny-Karabakh and other conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union — in the Trans-Dniester region, South Ossetia and Abhazia. We agree with the Russian Federation's position that the problem of mine clearance in conflict zones of Commonwealth of Independent States countries needs urgently to be resolved.

We share the view of security experts that the existing security institutions are not fully adequate to meet new challenges and threats. Expectations are high that international security structures such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and others will devote unprecedented levels of human and financial resources to conflict prevention and resolution. Demands are being made that international principles, norms and procedures be adapted to the new situation. Experts stress that today, when international stability no longer depends on negative factors such as mutual deterrence, the primary force for stability and security-building in the post-cold-war era is a cooperation based on the interdependence of national interests.

Although the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone could be considered only a partial step, it would certainly be a helpful contribution to a process that will eventually lead to general nuclear disarmament. In this connection, I should like to draw the attention of representatives to the initiative that has been proposed time and again by the

Heads of State of our country and of the neighbouring Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Only a week ago, our Foreign Minister, speaking before the General Assembly, reiterated this attractive idea in all its aspects.

The pursuit in good faith of this objective testifies to the strong determination of our Government to translate this idea into reality. The events of the last few years show the proposal's relevance and that there is a real opportunity for its implementation. We believe that this sort of arrangement would constitute an important disarmament measure and would enhance the security of the States concerned as well as stability in the region.

**Mr. Escovar Salom** (Venezuela)(*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. Chairman, allow me at the outset to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside over the work of the Committee. We are certain that given your experience and diplomatic skills, our session will have a successful outcome. You can be assured of my delegation's cooperation. I should like also to extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Venezuela signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, with the same enthusiasm as it did the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water.

All efforts made towards disarmament will enjoy Venezuela's firm and whole-hearted support. We hope that in the coming century humankind will be freed of all atomic weapons and weapons of mass destruction; to this end, we believe that disarmament negotiations must proceed towards that goal throughout the remainder of this century.

Within that context, at the Conference on Disarmament Venezuela supported the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons in three stages, as contained in document CD/1419 of 7 August 1996. The first phase is geared towards the reduction of the nuclear threat and the adoption of measures to ensure nuclear disarmament; the second phase covers the search for ways to reduce nuclear arsenals and promote confidence among States; and the third phase envisages the consolidation of a world free of weapons. In this regard, my delegation believes the CTBT constitutes a step forward in the quest for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and therefore attaches great importance to it and gives it its full support.

Effective and coordinated international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes one of the greatest priorities of the developing countries.

Venezuela is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We are a peaceful nation committed to disarmament, and, accordingly, we firmly support the conclusion of those treaties and warmly welcome the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that the threat or use of nuclear weapons runs counter to the norms of international law. In this regard, Venezuela hopes that the work of the First Committee will contribute substantially to the search for effective solutions aimed at the early conclusion of agreements in this area of disarmament.

Regarding the nuclear-weapon-free zones, my delegation would like to note that it was during the so-called cold war that the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world was established in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This was clear testimony of the political will and peaceful aims of the countries of the region. Today we note with great satisfaction the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in many regions of the world. The treaties of Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic are clear examples of the desire of peoples to be free of the threat of the terrible nuclear nightmare. Venezuela firmly supports the creation of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones and encourages the States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, instruments that are essential to the ban on these weapons. My delegation will support unreservedly all initiatives by the international community to establish such zones throughout the world.

In that context, my delegation would like also to thank the delegation of Brazil for its submission of a draft resolution on the consolidation of the southern hemisphere and its adjacent nuclear-weapon-free areas, to which we attach great importance. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus. Likewise, we call once again on the nuclear-Power States to contribute to this objective and to give assurances to non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of this type of weapon.

My delegation also welcomes with satisfaction the adoption by consensus of the "Guidelines for the international transfer of weapons", an issue that has been

taken up by the Disarmament Commission. We consider that illicit arms trafficking causes great harm to people, incites violence, promotes terrorism, protects drug trafficking and encourages general delinquency, which has a negative impact on the internal security and the socio-economic development of the States affected. It is our understanding that the guidelines adopted constitute a set of principles governing the transfer of weapons, and we hope that they will soon become valid and legally binding norms for all States. For now, they provide important and invaluable guidance for the conduct of nations in this regard, with the goal of preserving international peace and security.

At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution entitled "Measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms", demonstrating the international community's genuine interest in the total elimination of this scourge. That resolution invites Member States to take appropriate and effective measures to seek to ensure that illicit transfers of arms are immediately discontinued, and to provide the Secretary-General with relevant information. Moreover, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing the views expressed by Member States. We believe that this matter must continue to be considered with interest and in a comprehensive manner, as has been the case to date. Furthermore, my delegation hopes that the First Committee will again reach a consensus on this matter, as it did last year.

The serious problem of anti-personnel landmines has become one of the main priorities in the area of disarmament. The number of people killed, maimed or injured by this concealed weapon increases every day among the civilian population; its main victims are field workers, women and children, plunging thousands of families into mourning, desolation and sorrow. In addition, these devices cause serious damage to the economies of the countries in which they are planted.

Venezuela welcomes with satisfaction the decision of those States that have declared a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines. At the same time, however, it considers that a complete ban on the production, export, transfer and stockpiling of these weapons would be the definitive solution to the problem of those explosive devices, which are excessively injurious and have indiscriminate effects.

Another aspect that interests my delegation is the relationship between disarmament and development. In May of this year, the Non-Aligned Movement addressed a communication to the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, in his capacity as host of the summit meeting of the seven major industrialized countries (Group of 7), expressing the need for those countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of the gross national product to aid and cooperation for development for the least-developed countries, as set out in the Programme of Action of the Copenhagen World Social Summit. My delegation considers that the Group of Seven countries could reach this percentage by freeing the resources derived from the implementation of the agreements on disarmament and arms limitation.

Venezuela attaches special importance to regional disarmament. Recently, several regional initiatives have been taken to strengthen regional and international peace and security through the convening of meetings and other mechanisms designed to promote confidence-building measures, such as the Hemispheric Conference on Confidence Building Measures, held in Argentina in 1994; the Conference on Security and Confidence-Building Measures, held in Chile in 1995; and the summit meetings of Defence Ministers of the Hemisphere, one of which was held in Virginia in June 1995, and the other of which was held in Bariloche, Argentina, during the first week of this month. Other meetings held in this regard were the dialogue between the Rio Group and the European Union on confidence-building measures, held in São Paolo, Brazil, in April 1995; and the Central American demining programme, sponsored by the Special Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States. My country has participated in all these efforts and is a firm supporter of the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means.

As for the meeting of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we have noted with great satisfaction its inclusion in the agenda of the most recent meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. We have also noted the achievements made through the exchange of views on the matter, which we appreciate as a valuable contribution that will serve as a future basis for negotiations on this item.

In the light of existing realities in the disarmament process, in which international instruments are still under discussion and various questions are under negotiation, my delegation recommends allocating more time for concrete measures to be implemented in this area and suggests that it would be convenient to postpone the date of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament to a later time, perhaps until the year 2000.

Venezuela supports the establishment of norms or guidelines that are acceptable to Member States for governing international transfers of high technology with military applications. It also encourages the intensification of efforts to use science and technology for disarmament purposes and supports the use of that technology for the maintenance of international peace and security. My delegation believes that efforts should be intensified to arrive at a clear and concerted definition on this issue.

Within the context of education on disarmament, we are concerned by the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Secretary-General notes with deep regret that it has been necessary to suspend the activities of the Lima Centre for financial reasons until further notice. We must overcome this situation, in keeping with the United Nations concept that there can be no peace without development and no development without peace. The Disarmament Centres constitute fertile ground for the promotion of regional and international peace and security. For this reason, Venezuela joins in the appeal to Member States and to international organizations and foundations to make substantial contributions that will permit the early resumption of the Lima Centre's activities.

**Mr. Yativ** (Israel): I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. It is a well-deserved acknowledgment of your skills and competence. I can assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation in steering the deliberations of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

The Government and the people of Israel have always been united in the quest for peace with all their neighbours. The new Government is also firmly committed to continue with the ongoing efforts on the road to peace. The Madrid Conference has established the framework of the peacemaking process in both its bilateral and multilateral channels. The pillars of this process are the peace treaties between Israel and its immediate neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. The dialogue with the Palestinians has resumed in continuous efforts designed to resolve the differences between both sides and to implement the agreements.

Progress is being achieved. It is also one of the immediate goals of this Government to resume the dialogue with Syria as an important component of peace in our region. This policy was recently reiterated by Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. David Levy, before the General Assembly:

> "I wish solemnly to reaffirm Israel's irreversible commitment and determination to pursue the path of peace." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary meetings, 20th meeting, p. 13*)

Israel has ascribed significant importance to issues of regional security and arms control as an integral component of the peacemaking efforts in the Middle East. Given the volatility of our region, addressing such issues requires utmost caution and careful consideration. Today more than ever before it is abundantly clear that security, as both a regional and national goal, cannot be achieved without a total and unequivocal renunciation of violence as a political means. Israel's Foreign Minister, in his statement before the General Assembiy, also said that

> "security is neither an obsession nor a blind belief. It touches upon our very existence in a region where, unfortunately, threats and instability still rage. Security must be the cornerstone in the architecture of peace. It cannot, under any circumstances, tag along behind a process in which terrorism and violence have not yet spoken their last word." (*supra, p. 83*)

Likewise, it is important to stress once again that regional security problems can be settled only among the States of the region. Israel therefore supported the establishment of the Working Group on regional security and arms control as a regional forum within the peace process to complement the bilateral talks by seeking cooperative responses to security problems. It is Israel's fervent hope that this regional framework will be reconvened in order to address, with the active participation of all States of the Middle East, the regional security concerns of our region.

The concept of regionality is indeed the backbone of Israel's approach to issues of regional security and arms control. Israel's belief in this concept derives from one of the basic tenets of its foreign policy: the recognition that such problems can be addressed only by direct negotiations. This approach proved itself time and again, and was reiterated before the General Assembly by Israel's Foreign Minister, who said:

> "The advantage of this regional approach is that it is based on direct negotiations between the States of the region. The first stage is to build confidence, and thereafter, we must put arms

control and disarmament mechanisms into place." (*supra, p. 94*)

These advantages outweigh the global approach which cannot provide a response to the unique security problems in general and of Israel in particular.

Regionality is one of the principles of Israel's policy on the nuclear issue, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. With your permission, Sir, I wish to elaborate on the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, in both its global and regional aspects. The issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones has recently been the subject of much debate. Before outlining Israel's position on the matter, I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that as early as 1974, an Ad Hoc Group of Qualified Governmental Experts under the auspices of the Conference on Disarmament had prepared a comprehensive study on the question of nuclear-weapon-free-zones that was subsequently submitted to the General Assembly. It would be pertinent to quote from that report, especially on the issue of the relevance of regional considerations in the context of the principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The report states:

> "Conditions in which nuclear-weapon-free zones might be viable and might enhance security are bound to differ considerably from region to region. The security considerations and perceptions of States ... vary, and it is not possible or realistic, a priori, to set out precise guidelines for the creation of zones, since it is for Governments themselves to decide on their own security requirements and to determine their immediate and long-term national interests." (*CCD/467, chapter III, para. 9*)

Indeed, a study of the basic principles that guided the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions indicate that all regional parties share a number of common interests. Whether in Latin America, the Pacific region or in Africa, the respective regional States enjoyed common denominators that constituted absolute prerequisites for the creation of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. The conditions that prevailed prior to the establishment of the zones included, *inter alia*, peaceful relations and mutual confidence, economic cooperation and a general belief in the enhancement of common interests through institutional regional frameworks. The urge to embark on such an endeavour was, in all cases, a result of regional initiative and direct negotiations culminating in a consensus. Even then a long and arduous process was required to attain the goal of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Turning to the Middle East, the situation is, unfortunately, different. At this time, several regional States are still in a formal state of war with Israel. Moreover, some regional States still refuse to forswear war as a means of settling disputes and are attempting, directly or indirectly, to impede the peace process, including by means of terror. Hence, it is evident that at the present time, many of the prerequisites for meaningful discussions on arms control in the Middle East, including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, are still missing.

Therefore, Israel's policy on the nuclear issue in the region of the Middle East is based on the following principles, the first of which is comprehensiveness. The nuclear issue should be dealt with in the full context of the peace process and of all security problems, conventional and non-conventional.

Secondly, as regards a regional framework, nuclear non-proliferation will be achieved only through the establishment, in due course, of a mutually verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Thirdly, a step-by-step approach will be required. Practicality dictates beginning the process with confidence- and security-building measures, establishing relations of peace and reconciliation among all States and peoples of the region, and, in due course, complementing the process by dealing with conventional and non-conventional arms control, where priorities are assigned to systems that experience has proven to be destructive and destabilizing.

Fourthly, as regards the primacy of the peace process, negotiations on all issues concerning the security of the region must take place in a free and direct way, within the framework of the peace process, encompassing all States in the region.

Israel believes that the day will come when conditions in our area will be conducive to direct discussions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Until such time, the notion that has to be inculcated is that in the process of peacemaking no issue can be settled in isolation, but that progress in one area, particularly that of political accommodation, can lead to progress in other areas as well.

In his report of 25 October 1993, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East (A/48/399), the Secretary-General said that

> "a nuclear-weapon-free zone cannot be conceived of or implemented in a political vacuum, separate from the process of mutual reconciliation." *(A/48/399, para. 22)*

Israel supports this concept *in toto* and therefore believes that a credible nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East can only set the seal on a durable peace; it cannot possibly precede it. Any premature attempt to discuss the establishment of such a zone or to apply an agenda that does not reflect the reality of the region is premature and is bound to fail. The right approach, therefore, must be to study and promote peaceful relations as a prerequisite for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Notwithstanding its concept of regionality, Israel has manifested a continuing openness towards addressing issues of arms control in general. Israel believes that, where appropriate, global arrangements can complement regional agreements. In accordance with this approach, we have been engaged in discussions and negotiations on various subjects of arms control in New York, Geneva and elsewhere. In this regard, I wish to enumerate several examples.

First, Israel has reiterated on numerous occasions its support for the banning of nuclear-test explosions. Consequently, Israel took an active role in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiating process at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Although the CTBT text does not satisfactorily address some of our major concerns, we supported the final text, cosponsored the General Assembly resolution adopting the text, and were among the first countries to sign the Treaty.

Israel attaches great importance to the attitude of its regional neighbours. Their decision to adhere to the Treaty will play a supportive role at the regional level and will contribute to peace and security in the Middle East. Furthermore, in considering CTBT ratification Israel will take into account, *inter alia*, developments in our region, including the adherence to the Treaty by key States from our region. We therefore call upon all States that have not yet done so to join in making the CTBT a truly universal Treaty, ending all nuclear explosions.

A second example is Israel's position on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed To Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) and on anti-personnel landmines. Israel supports the international effort being made to resolve the problem of the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines, which results in casualties, mostly of innocent and defenceless civilians, United Nations peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid personnel. In March 1995, Israel ratified the CCW, participated in the Review Conference that amended Protocol II of the Convention, and is currently reviewing that revised landmines Protocol. Israel supports the efforts being made to extend the accession of the CCW to as many States as possible, particularly in the Middle East.

Israel opposes the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines and, accordingly, adopted in 1994, a unilateral moratorium prohibiting their export. That moratorium was recently extended for an additional three years. However, due to Israel's unique situation in the Middle East, which involves the ongoing threat of hostilities and terrorist activities along the border, Israel is obliged to maintain its capability to use anti-personnel landmines for self-defence in general, and along the borders in particular. Such a use of anti-personnel landmines is in accordance with the requirements of the Convention.

Hence, Israel is unable at this juncture to commit itself to a complete ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines, until alternative and effective measures are available to ensure the protection of its security forces operating in regions still facing armed conflicts and of civilians facing a daily threat to their lives. At the same time, Israel supports a gradual process in which each State will undertake to cease proliferation of anti-personnel landmines, accept restrictions on their possible use and, once circumstances permit, ban their production.

Thirdly, regarding transparency in armaments, Israel was among the first countries to support the resolution on the establishment of the Register of Conventional Arms that was introduced in this Committee. Israel was also among the first to send regularly its reports to the Register in compliance with the relevant resolution. It is unfortunate that Israel is the only State in our region that has consistently done so.

The Secretary-General once described the Register as a "cooperative exercise in confidence-building". Indeed, the Register is certainly an important instrument in a long process that aims to achieve the implementation of global confidence-building measures. However, transparency in armaments cannot achieve its goals unless all countries fulfil their obligations by complying with the prescribed requirements. This factor applies particularly to our own region, where States still refrain from joining the Register.

It is our view that until regional participation in the Register is enhanced, further development or expansion of the Register would be premature.

Fourthly, Israel has consistently argued that the abolishment of chemical weapons and the creation of a region free from chemical weapons is important to the consolidation of the peace process and the stability of the region. Hence, Israel has consistently played a constructive and positive role in regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Israel was among the original signatories of that Convention in January 1993 in Paris. It took this stand in the hope that more States in the region would accede to the Convention. This did not happen, and, unfortunately, several Middle Eastern States continue to oppose the CWC while arming themselves with chemical weapons. Israel will have to take this into account when the ratification of the Convention comes up for consideration.

I wish to conclude by saying that it is Israel's desire to continue on the road to peace for the benefit of all States in the region. There is no substitute for this process or for its modalities: first and foremost, direct negotiations between the parties concerned. We call upon the international community to give this process its unqualified understanding and support so that the attainment of the long-coveted goal of peace and reconciliation in our region will be realized in this generation.

**Ms. Ghose** (India): Please accept our congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that the deliberations of the First Committee will function smoothly and successfully under your wise guidance. May I also convey our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I should like also to express my delegation's deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia.

The disarmament and international security scenario appears to us today to be one of shadows and light. There is uncertainty and instability in the global scene, which we need to recognize. A dispassionate and realistic appraisal of where we, the international community, are today would reveal the insecurities, the distrust, and, most troubling, an unremitting and seemingly reasonable pressure towards the establishment of a permanently and unequally divided international security regime. Let me elaborate. The Chemical Weapons Convention, which all of us negotiated intensively and in good faith for over a decade, is about to come into force — without the ratification of the Treaty by countries that have declared possession of these weapons. While we have noted the assurances of one of those States to soon move on this matter, the fact — the reality — remains that chemical weapons are banned for those that do not have them, leaving those that do, and in whose interests the Treaty was tailored, outside the Treaty's control.

We are making some progress, it is true, in strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). But although so many countries are parties to this Convention, there still exist, within the membership of the States parties, select and exclusive groups that unilaterally determine — ostensibly in the name of, again, non-proliferation and export control — the countries among which trade in these fearsome agents and technologies may take place, even though other States have accepted the obligations of the Convention.

And then, of course, we have the most unequal of regimes in the area of weapons of mass destruction: the area of nuclear weapons. Is it not strange that we can ban through conventions chemical and biological weapons, but we must not even talk of a convention to ban nuclear weapons, leave alone negotiate one? Is it not even more strange that some countries assert, with an absolute emphasis that will not be questioned, their right to possess, use and threaten to use these monstrous weapons in the interest of their security and the security of their allies — those under their nuclear umbrella — while insisting that the rest of us do not have that right? Should security interests not be of equal importance to us? That "logic", if one may so term this convoluted reasoning, led inevitably, and in an unorthodox manner to which we have become accustomed, to the indefinite extension of a discriminatory Treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), last year, making permanent the inequality. It was said then that there was a matching bargain on nuclear disarmament, but we all know that this was not borne out during the negotiations of the so-called comprehensive Treaty banning nuclear testing.

Today we hear the same voices urging the merits of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials. We have been warned of the so-called dangers of linkage with nuclear disarmament, the deep pit into which we must not fall. Yet if this treaty is not a disarmament step — if it does not halt the production and manufacture of nuclear weapons totally and in a non-discriminatory way — all we would get is the reinforcement of the trend that would preserve nuclear hegemony in the hands of a few uncontrolled States and of their allies who benefit from, or whose security is dependent on, the weapons of the nuclear-weapon State.

Outside this shadowy world of partial, unequal treaties, we find the situation equally grim. Bilateral treaties are not ratified, and there appears to be no prospect of a new round of negotiations to move towards elimination of nuclear weapons. There are no indications that the other nuclear-weapon States are even willing to join this process in the foreseeable future. India has, since the early 1950s, called for a complete cessation of nuclear testing and for a prohibition on the use of fissionable material for weapons. We have, however, above all called for the prohibition and elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. We did not call for a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for environmental reasons, but to halt the development of nuclear weapons and the nuclear arms race; our call for a ban on the production of fissile material was made at a time when the materials were in short supply and were fuelling the build-up of nuclear arsenals. Our objective has, however, remained consistent with the total elimination of nuclear weapons, not the creation of an unequal world.

We are aware that there continues to be a refusal by the nuclear-weapon States to engage in any meaningful discussions on the elimination of these weapons. The continued retention of these weapons by a few States which insist that they are essential to their security and that of their allies yet deny that same right to others has led to a situation in which the shadows become a smoke screen, a situation that is not only discriminatory but dangerously unstable. We view this situation with apprehension. We urge our colleagues here to take a closer look at the situation in the clear light of day. This is not a situation that can, or indeed should, be viewed with any sense of self-satisfaction. Nuclear weapons are still in existence. They are still being tested, improved and modernized. Our security and the security of the entire world remains at risk.

Yet between the shadows there is light. This week speaker after speaker has called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Many have drawn attention to the programme of action, proposed by a large number of members of the Conference on Disarmament, to eliminate nuclear weapons in a phased, time-bound programme. Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, representing the majority of the Members of the United Nations, have called for immediate commencement of negotiations towards that end. International non-governmental organizations, including the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, have pointed to "the inconsistency and hypocrisy" of the position of the nuclear-weapon States, which have been

> "conspicuously reluctant to participate in the development of a comprehensive framework"

through which the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons could be effectively pursued. The Pugwash Conferences urges in its annual statement this year that nations make

> "an immediate and unequivocal commitment to the negotiation and conclusion of a convention on the elimination of nuclear weapons and to begin working on it".

Another international group, the Canberra Commission, whose findings we will examine in detail after their presentation to the General Assembly and to the Conference on Disarmament, has also pointed out that the nuclear-weapon States should

> "make an unequivocal and demonstrated commitment to shrink and ultimately eliminate their nuclear arsenals".

That Commission, too, has examined a new treaty option, and while electing not to fix a precise time-frame, has expressed its support of the

> "basic importance of agreed targets and guidelines which would drive the process inexorably towards the ultimate objective of final elimination, at the earliest possible time".

Above all, we have received the unanimous Judgment of the International Court of Justice that there exists the obligation not only to begin but also to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective control. This Judgment states unequivocally that negotiations must begin and conclude — that is, the negotiations must be comprehensive and verifiable, and, most importantly, the process must not be open-ended, but finite and time-bound.

This demand will not die. This is the voice and expectation of the entire international community, non-governmental organizations and the International Court of Justice. It is a demand that must be met.

The next step, therefore, is obvious. It cannot and must not be another partial convention — inequality and discrimination masquerading as that which is all that is achievable. With 27 other countries that are members of the Conference on Disarmament, India has supported a phased,

step-by-step approach that would lead, within a specific time-frame, to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Within this phased programme, however, we feel that the time has come to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention and on working on a verification system for a nuclear-weapon-free world. We will be proposing once again a resolution promoting a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. This would, we believe, be subsumed under the nuclear weapons convention once the process of negotiations had begun.

A step-by-step process can only be meaningful if it is part of a comprehensive framework, otherwise there is a constant danger of each step's being the last. The entire route to the elimination of nuclear weapons, including the stages, should be charted out and put into reasonable but finite time-frames. The nuclear weapons convention, like the Chemical Weapons Convention and the BWC, should prohibit all aspects — the use, development, production, testing, stockpiling and transfer of nuclear weapons.

India's recent experience of negotiating in the Conference on Disarmament has not inspired trust, an essential element in disarmament negotiations. Let me recall that three years ago, when a nuclear-weapon State opposed a consensus in the Conference on an issue not relating to its security, members of the Conference respected the right of that country to maintain its position, and even those States directly affected by the decision did not think of subverting the Conference's decision-making procedures. Last month, however, the procedure adopted to bypass India's objections to a Treaty that, in it's view, directly impinged on its security interests, bypassed not India, whose vote in the General Assembly made its position unequivocal, but the Conference itself.

The consensus procedure was adopted to protect the security interests of all Member States. Today, the fear will always remain that if the nuclear-weapon States and those countries whose security interests are guaranteed by arrangements with the nuclear-weapon States so desire that protection in negotiations may not exist. Nonetheless, the Conference on Disarmament is the only truly multilateral forum we have for negotiating disarmament treaties, in which members and observers alike may participate fully in negotiations. Throughout this year, however, despite General Assembly resolution 50/70 P and despite the efforts of the countries of the Group of 21, the Conference on Disarmament was unable to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This failure, it must be recognized, is due to the rigid refusal of some States to discuss nuclear disarmament, an attitude that is stubbornly out of tune with the desires and expectations of the international community. We are therefore supporting a move by a majority of Non-Aligned Movement countries to establish that committee this year — not to negotiate another partial, flawed treaty, but to commence negotiations on a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are determined to keep nuclear disarmament on the international disarmament agenda. This issue must be faced squarely. We are aware of the complexities involved. However, the international community is no longer willing to accept ratiocinations that hide the reality of the reluctance of the nuclear-weapon States to give up a weapon that has not been used for 40 years except as a currency of power. We will not be satisfied with half measures that masquerade as major achievements towards nuclear disarmament. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a case in point. I do not need to repeat our objections to the Treaty — they are, or should be, well known. What appears to be less well known is that we support the stoppage of nuclear-test explosions, but believe that this Treaty, in its present form, is dangerous. It is only a partial ban on nuclear testing. Nuclear testing by sophisticated non-explosive means available to nuclear-weapon States will be permitted to continue by this so-called comprehensive Treaty, and nuclear weapons will continue to be qualitatively developed and upgraded. This was made possible by the refusal of the majority of the nuclear-weapon States to accept a commitment to eliminate their weapons within a reasonable, or indeed any, span of time. As long as these weapons exist, there will be efforts to modernize and upgrade them.

Now we are being sold a fissile material cut-off treaty again as a partial treaty — indeed, it has been described here only as a non-proliferation treaty. But the majority of countries, I am told repeatedly, are already subject to non-proliferation controls — controls that are being refined and tightened in Vienna in the Programme 93+2. At least four of the five nuclear-weapon States have announced unilateral moratoriums on the production of fissile material — not, of course, as a disarmament measure, but because there is so much of it around. So why another non-proliferation treaty? We are not in favour of proliferation, but we are unable to understand the urgency of this proposal.

In fact, there is a strange similarity between the reasoning behind this proposal and that behind the CTBT. When nuclear explosions were no longer necessary to the nuclear-weapon States, they were banned. When there is an overabundance of fissile material for the nuclear-weapon States, they seek to prohibit its production by others. A

prohibition on the production of fissile material that would halt the manufacture of nuclear weapons would be worth striving for; but if this prohibition is to be another partial treaty that permits the nuclear-weapon States to retain the option of utilizing the fissile materials in their stockpiles to continue to manufacture nuclear weapons, it would be one more treaty we can do without. In other words, such an agreement, if it is not to be yet another unequal instrument controlling only horizontal proliferation, can be only one aspect of a nuclear weapons convention that would ban the manufacture and production of nuclear weapons.

On the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, India respects the right of every country to safeguard its security in a manner it deems appropriate. Therefore, we respect the arrangements freely arrived at by countries of a particular region that accord with the guidelines endorsed by the United Nations. We continue to believe, however, that nuclear-weapon-free zones are not the answer to what is clearly a global problem. Nuclear weapons are a global menace. They do not respect territorial or regional boundaries. Partial measures such as nuclear-weapon-free zones only give the impression of progress, which is undermined by the global reach and deployment of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States. Our responses to the various draft resolutions on this issue will be informed by this position.

On 3 September 1996, India deposited our instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We are fully aware that depositing our instrument of ratification brings all of us one step closer to bringing the Convention into force. This could be a momentous event, as the Convention would eradicate a whole class of weapons of mass destruction. But, it could also turn out to be a hollow event, as we note with regret that the two declared possessors of chemical weapons remain outside the Convention. If this situation persists, the integrity and utility of the entire Convention may be called into question. We would have a disarmament treaty, but the possession, development, production and use of chemical weapons would still be allowed for major chemical weapons producers and possessors. Not only is this against the fundamental concept and purpose of the Convention, but it raises major security concerns. We therefore urge all those countries that have not done so, particularly the United States and Russia, to ratify and implement the Convention at the earliest possible time.

India is also a signatory to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and has participated assiduously and constructively in the process of strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. We hope that a strengthened Convention will serve to ensure that this class of weapons is also effectively eradicated. The Ad Hoc Group set up by the Special Conference of the States Parties to the Convention in 1994 has, despite the complex nature of the work, registered significant progress. We look forward to continued, intensified progress in this Group next year. We believe it important that the entire Convention be seen as a subject of compliance measures. In particular, the States parties must fully comply with the obligations laid down not only in article I, but also in articles III and X of the Convention.

The unimpeded transfer and exchange of biotechnology for peaceful purposes will be critical in achieving universal adherence to the Convention and in creating a non-discriminatory and transparent regime. In this context, it needs to be reiterated that India acknowledges the necessity of regulating transfers of dual-use technology in order to ensure that it is used only for peaceful purposes. It is our view, however, that the guidelines for such controls should be multilaterally negotiated, universally applicable and non-discriminatory. Such guidelines, which impinge directly on the socio-economic development of other countries, particularly the developing countries, cannot be arbitrarily decided and implemented by groups of countries operating as closed and exclusive clubs.

The Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, known as the CCW, was successfully completed in Geneva this year with the adoption of a revised Protocol II on landmines and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. The Review Conference conducted its work against the backdrop of the tragic landmine crisis created by irresponsible exports and the indiscriminate use of these weapons. India's efforts in the Review Conference were governed by the belief that the true focus should remain the civilian, whose life and livelihood must be protected from the menace of landmines. It is clear, however, that despite the strengthened Protocol there remain grave areas of concern. The transfer of landmines has not been banned; the use of remotely delivered mines does not attract strict regulations; and the production, use and transfer of "smart" mines may actually have been encouraged by the process.

India supports the move towards a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines, a ban which we feel should be universal and non-discriminatory. While the indiscriminate use of landmines is clearly reprehensible, it needs to be realized that many countries today use these mines as weapons of defence along long, live borders to keep out enemy forces. As we move towards a ban, this function will have to be carried out by some other means and alternative solutions will have to be worked out. In bringing about such a ban, it may be useful to follow a pragmatic approach which addresses the problem in a phased manner. The international community should also, as part of this initiative, address the critical issue of mine clearance and dedicate greater effort and assistance to afflicted areas.

Other conventional weapons must continue to engage the attention of the international community. All efforts must be made to ensure that excessive production, development and transfer of such weapons beyond legitimate security needs are curbed. Restraint and greater transparency in arms transfers could lead to increased confidence and should be encouraged.

The setting up of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to which India has contributed regularly, marks an important step in this direction. This has to be further consolidated so that its full potential as a genuine confidence-building measure can be realized.

We are particularly concerned at the continued transfer of small arms and light weapons, especially where illicit trade in such weapons leads to their diversion to non-State entities. Such illicit traffic in arms can have a disproportionately large negative impact, particularly for the internal security and socio-economic development of affected States. International cooperation in curbing illicit arms traffic and condemning it will be an important factor in combating this phenomenon.

We welcome in this regard the paper entitled "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991", which was adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. We would like to compliment Ambassador Hoffmann for his efforts in achieving this step forward. Endorsement of these guidelines by the United Nations General Assembly would be a valuable first step in this area — a step on which further work could be built.

We look forward to the report of the panel of governmental experts on small arms, which was set up by the Secretary-General. We are considering offering some inputs directly to the panel to contribute to its work.

A number of important issues face us during our deliberations this year and in the years to come. The disarmament and international security agenda for the future can be comprehensively addressed — with regard to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons — through the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We would strongly urge that thorough preparations for this session begin as early as possible next year. However, it bears reiterating that the issue of nuclear disarmament, by its very nature, is an issue which must now receive the full attention and energy of the international community that it deserves.

We must make a concerted effort to start work on a nuclear weapons convention. We must ensure that the Conference on Disarmament is enabled to carry out its mandate and the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament up early next year to consider a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, but always keeping our eye on the objective: the elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

**Mr. Wilmot** (Ghana): In speaking for the first time in this Committee, it is my pleasure, on behalf of my delegation, to extend to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau our congratulations on your election. I am confident that, under your guidance, the work of this Committee will proceed smoothly to a successful conclusion. You can rest assured of our support in the task ahead.

The past two years have witnessed a number of important developments in the field of disarmament. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and related decisions in May 1995 on strengthening the review process for the Treaty and on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; the adoption of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia; the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons; the adoption in May 1996 by the Disarmament Commission of guidelines for international arms transfers; and, most recently, the adoption in September this year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the General Assembly are all indicators of the resolve of the international community to make progress on disarmament issues, which are so important for the enhancement of international peace and security.

With the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1970, States Parties, constituting the vast majority of States, undertook, in accordance with article VI,

> "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at any early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

The legality of this commitment was only recently confirmed by the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion. We therefore do not agree with the position advanced by some delegations that nuclear disarmament should be left solely to bilateral negotiations. We do not accept the argument that a strategy of linkage in this respect is a strategy of failure; rather, it is a strategy of equality, justice and equity.

The end of the cold war, with its consequent easing of international tension, has created an enabling environment in which we ought to pursue diligently and with the good faith of all Parties our Treaty obligations leading to the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the liquidation of nuclear stockpiles, as well as their means of delivery.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Ghana abides by the word and spirit of the Treaty and in 1995 joined our sister States of the African continent to sign the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Pelindaba Treaty. This Treaty, together with the Treaties of Tlatelolco in Latin America and Rarotonga in the South Pacific, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the Antarctic Treaty, enhances the prospects of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, which we hope will materialize with the cooperation and support of States parties to the various treaties and the nuclear-weapon States, in particular.

In this respect, it is our hope and prayer that conditions in the Middle East and South Asia will, in the near future, generate enough confidence among the States of those regions to enable them freely to conclude regional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, in pursuit of our common objective of nuclear non- proliferation as a first step to the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Our efforts will, however, be to no avail without the cooperation of the nuclear-weapon States. In spite of numerous unanswered questions, we agreed with them in 1995 to extend the NPT indefinitely. Despite the shortcomings of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we again joined them in September this year in the General Assembly to adopt that Treaty, which, like them, we have since signed, as have the vast majority of States.

We took these steps in spite of our reservations because of our desire to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and to create a propitious atmosphere for negotiations to begin without further delay on a treaty for the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound framework.

In the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade (resolution 35/46) adopted by the General Assembly in December 1980, it is noted that, nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is therefore no accident that the international community considers nuclear disarmament as an objective of the highest priority on the disarmament agenda. All States need to contribute to its realization, to save succeeding generations from a nuclear catastrophe, and release energies and resources expended on nuclear armaments for peaceful applications in the service of mankind.

The proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419), submitted to the Conference on Disarmament by its Non-Aligned Movement members and other States, would help achieve this objective. We therefore support it and hope it will also be supported by all members of this Committee.

While weapons of mass destruction rightly deserve the focus of our attention, we are not oblivious to the havoc being wrecked in diverse areas of conflict worldwide through the use of conventional weapons. In recent times, the indiscriminate use of landmines and the proliferation of small arms have caught the attention of the international community and we support efforts aimed at bringing these under control.

In his report of 3 November 1995, the Secretary-General aptly described landmines as

> "a weapon of mass destruction in slow motion, because they indiscriminately kill or maim massive numbers of human beings over a long period of time." *(A/50/701; para. 5)*

We neither manufacture nor stock anti-personnel landmines in Ghana, and we support moratoriums by

concerned countries on their production and use. We also support proposals for the early conclusion of an international agreement on a global ban on the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines and subscribe to the decision of the Organization of African Unity to ban the production, use, stockpiling, sale and export of this category of armaments in the continent in order to protect the well-being of African children and peoples.

I would like to express our profound regret that the Disarmament Commission has, in recent years, failed to make substantive recommendations on subjects of interest approved for its consideration by the General Assembly. In fact, at its 1995 session, it failed to agree on a second substantive agenda item for consideration. If left unchecked, these trends could seriously undermine the Commission's credibility.

In spite of this rather sombre observation, we are encouraged by the fact that the Commission was able, at its 1995 session, to adopt, by consensus, guidelines for international arms transfers, which are contained in its report in document A/51/42. It is our hope that this achievement will rekindle confidence in the work of the Commission and renew the determination of its members to reinvigorate it for the efficient performance of its mandated functions as a universal deliberative organ of the General Assembly.

The difficulties faced by the Disarmament Commission are indicative of growing uncertainties in the whole disarmament agenda of the post-cold-war era at the dawn of a new millennium. The fourth special session on disarmament, called for by the Non-Aligned Movement and other States, should provide the international community with an opportunity to assess and review this agenda, as well as related deliberative and negotiating machinery, to prepare them better for the twenty-first century. It is our hope that the fifty-first session of the General Assembly will arrive at appropriate decisions in pursuit of this objective.

**Mr. Dangue Réwaka** (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Gabon is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over our work. Your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee is a tribute both to your personal merits and to your country, Belarus. Please be assured of our full cooperation.

We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, the new Secretary of our Committee, Mr. Lin, and the members of the Secretariat for the quality of their service.

To your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, we express all our gratitude for his outstanding chairmanship.

On 12 December 1995, the General Assembly called upon

> "all States participating in the Conference on Disarmament, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to conclude, as a task of the highest priority, a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, so as to enable its signature by the outset of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly." *(resolution 50/65, para. 2)*

After a lengthy and difficult negotiating process within the Conference on Disarmament, the General Assembly indeed adopted on 10 September the final text of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which 126 States have already signed.

The adoption of this important Treaty demonstrates at least one thing: When the context is favourable and political will is duly asserted, it is possible to promote the cause of nuclear disarmament by adhering to a highly specific timetable.

My delegation would like to believe that the impetus of the signing of the CTBT will strengthen the determination of the international community totally to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Of course, nothing is perfect and there are reasons for recalling the inherent shortcomings in the principal agreements on nuclear non-proliferation — be they in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or in the new CTBT — in particular, the lack of a specific commitment by the nuclear Powers to engage in nuclear disarmament, even within the framework of a programme to which they have freely agreed.

However, our approach here is that it is better to have a normative framework with some imperfections than to have nothing at all. In that spirit, my country's Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 7

October of this year. For the authorities of Gabon, that Treaty is not an end in itself but must in fact become one valuable instrument of the overall global system that must be established to achieve general and complete disarmament.

The past half-century has clearly demonstrated that it is possible to maintain international peace and security without recourse to nuclear weapons. That incontrovertible fact highlights not only the importance of instruments and machinery for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons but also, and above all, the need for the ongoing mobilization of the international community in the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Everyone here will agree that the present climate of post-cold-war confidence offers an extraordinary opportunity for accelerating the process of nuclear disarmament with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, which today are indeed onerous and threatening both for those who possess them and for the rest of mankind.

Thus, the strengthening of the NPT, which we shall soon be discussing, should be undertaken on the basis of the relevant provisions of that Treaty's article VI and preamble, as reaffirmed in the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. In this context, the non-nuclear-weapon countries are justified in seeking security guarantees from the nuclear Powers.

That legitimate expectation finally has a legal basis, albeit not a binding one, if we refer to the Advisory Opinion unanimously rendered by the International Court of Justice on 8 July of this year, describing the threat or use of nuclear weapons as contrary to international law and called upon States Members to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. The Opinion of the International Court of Justice is of symbolic value and should rekindle our determination to carry forward the nuclear disarmament process.

Without further delay, negotiation on a treaty halting the production of fissile material for military purposes should be made a priority goal on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament in order to make the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as consistent as possible.

A dynamic trend with positive effects that should be expanded on is the trend towards the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this connection, the signing at Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty has augmented the denuclearization of the southern hemisphere begun by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Rarotonga and the Treaty of Bangkok.

The initiative of Brazil to have the General Assembly recognize the emergence of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the whole of the southern hemisphere is noteworthy in many ways. However, given the lack of any total denuclearization on the global scale, no region of the world can ultimately be free from nuclear terror.

In the sphere of weapons of mass destruction, we welcome the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, the scope of that Convention will be limited so long as the United States of America and the Russian Federation have not taken the decision to ratify it.

Because of their extreme sensitivity and manifold implications, questions of disarmament can be addressed only from the limited perspective of the security needs of States. Such an orientation is likely to sacrifice the heartfelt desire for a world free from the spectre of nuclear war and of war itself, an ideal that is still, unfortunately, a distant dream.

Indeed, the silence imposed on nuclear weapons has not prevented the proliferation of armed conflicts throughout the world or the massive and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. Hence the urgent need to give efforts to achieve conventional disarmament the same priority accorded to those devoted to nuclear disarmament.

We therefore appeal wholeheartedly for the adoption of concrete measures for conventional disarmament that can provide all nations, and in particular those that are daily facing the horrors of war, with better opportunities to strengthen their security. The delegation of Gabon is prepared to support any resolution on this issue.

In the same vein, we believe that there is a need to arrive at appropriate means to achieve action on the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H that were adopted by the Disarmament Commission. In fact, those guidelines contain principles that can usefully contribute to a better control of international arms transfers and prevent, combat and eradicate illicit arms trafficking, a phenomenon that remains one of the underlying causes for the proliferation of conventional weapons and the aggravation of armed conflicts throughout the world.

In the more specific area of anti-personnel mines, the efforts made by the Canadian Government and supported by 50 countries, including my own, as well as by a great number of non-governmental organizations, deserve the support of us all. It is indeed crucial that we do everything possible to achieve the rapid adoption of a treaty on a total halt to the use, manufacture, stockpiling and transfer of such inhuman weapons.

Before achieving that goal, all States directly concerned in the question of anti-personnel mines could, while respecting the provisions of the Plan of Action of the Ottawa Conference, undertake to observe a moratorium until the adoption of a treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

The achievement of that critical objective must of necessity be accompanied by a concomitant technological and financial commitment by the international community to accelerate the pace of the demining operations already under way and of all those that cannot be implemented because of lack of sufficient resources.

Although it is still crucial to pursue disarmament efforts in all categories of weapons, the best way to avoid having recourse to arms is to avoid waging war, especially through the establishment of confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels.

Strong in that belief and motivated by a profound desire to focus their major resources on the promotion of development activities, on 8 July 1996 the Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa signed, at Yaoundé, Cameroon, a Non-Aggression Pact among the States members of that Committee.

To give that Pact specific content, they decided to establish, under United Nations auspices, a permanent early warning system as a basic instrument for preventive diplomacy in Central Africa. We are convinced that, without that tool, the decisions taken by the Standing Advisory Committee would remain a dead letter. This important subregional initiative requires the support of the international community if it is to consolidate peace and security in one of the most troubled areas of the African continent.

In the pursuit of their efforts to consolidate peace and subregional security, the Central African Heads of State and Government adopted other specific measures, which are set forth in document A/51/274. Here, we wish to thank the United Nations Secretary-General for establishing the trust fund requested by the General Assembly. We should also like to express our gratitude to the Japanese Government for its generous contribution to that fund and appeal to other Member States that can contribute to the realization of the security objectives undertaken in the Central African subregion.

Before concluding my statement, I should like to emphasize that today we have a moral obligation to conclude the disarmament process. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should provide us with an opportunity to draw up the terms of reference for a bold programme for general and complete disarmament. The way in which we meet that challenge will determine our ability to preserve future generations from the scourge of war and to consolidate our shared will to establish a world in which arms no longer have a place.

**Mr. Sha Zukang** (China)(*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, please allow me to congratulate you, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, on your election to preside over the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. The Chinese delegation is confident that, with your outstanding diplomatic skills and rich experience, you will surely guide the Committee to success. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and to extend our thanks to Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia for the tremendous contribution he made to the work of the First Committee at the last session of the General Assembly.

Our welcome also goes to Mr. Lin Kuo-chung, the new Secretary of the First Committee. The Chinese delegation will, as always, work with other delegations towards the successful conclusion of the Committee's work.

Significant progress has been achieved in the field of international arms control and disarmament since the last session of the General Assembly. Not long ago, the Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In the brief span of a few weeks, 126 countries have already signed the Treaty. The Chemical Weapons Convention is expected to enter into force soon. The States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons have adopted the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons and have amended the Protocol on mines, placing greater restrictions on the use of landmines. Major efforts are being made to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention. Countries in Africa and South-East

Asia have concluded the Pelindaba Treaty and the Treaty of Bangkok, respectively, further expanding the areas covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones.

At the same time, we cannot but recognize that huge nuclear arsenals still exist; that concluded treaties on the reduction of nuclear weapons have yet to come into effect; that some nuclear-weapon States still cling to their policy of nuclear deterrence; that certain countries are actively engaged in research on and development of missile defences and other destabilizing weapon systems; that the Chemical Weapons Convention is still not ratified by the major chemical-weapon- possessing States, and that the large quantities of chemical weapons some countries have abandoned on the territories of others are still posing a constant threat to lives and properties in the countries affected. In these circumstances, much work still needs to be done in the sphere of international arms control and disarmament. We have no reason to relax. Instead, we must give serious thought to the question of how further to promote the process of international arms control and disarmament for the enhancement of international peace, security and stability.

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive of the three categories of weapons of mass destruction. For this reason, nuclear disarmament has long been a question of the highest priority for the entire international community and in particular for the vast number of non-nuclear-weapon States. If we can agree on a complete ban on two types of weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological weapons — and conclude international treaties to that purpose, we have no reason not to be able to agree on the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Chinese Government has always stood for and advocated the early conclusion of an international legal instrument on the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Pending the attainment of that goal, we should and can, in the meantime, take certain steps.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of such steps. For the first time in history, we now have a Treaty that, in a legally binding form, globally bans any nuclear-weapon test explosion and any other nuclear explosion in any environment and at any place. Notwithstanding the various drawbacks of the Treaty, with which the Chinese Government is not completely satisfied, we believe that it contributes to the advancement of the nuclear-disarmament process and to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, thus enhancing international peace and security. Based on this recognition, the Chinese delegation participated throughout the negotiations with a serious and responsible attitude and made important contributions to the final conclusion of the Treaty. It was also based on this recognition that China resolved to become one of the first countries to sign the Treaty. We sincerely hope that the Treaty can enjoy universal adherence and observance as soon as possible.

The abandonment of the policy of nuclear deterrence by the nuclear-weapon States and the further reduction of nuclear weapons by countries with huge nuclear arsenals are other steps that should and can be taken prior to the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear deterrence was the product of the cold war and should now be gone as well. Today, when the cold war is already a thing of the past, the insistence on nuclear deterrence is an expression of cold-war mentality and obviously anachronistic. It will not bring security to any country.

On the issue of nuclear disarmament, we welcome the efforts of the two nuclear super-Powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals. However, those efforts are far from enough. The fact is that they still possess over 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons. Therefore, they are still in duty bound to continue to reduce their nuclear weapons substantially. China, in specific historical circumstances, was forced to develop and possess a small number of nuclear weapons. China has done so purely for its own survival and self-defence. Its nuclear weapons have never posed nor been intended to pose any threat to others. As a nuclear-weapon State, China has always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. It has never evaded its responsibility for nuclear disarmament.

A commitment by all nuclear-weapon States to the non-first use of nuclear weapons, at any time and under any circumstances, and unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the early conclusion of international legal instruments to that effect is yet another step that can and should be taken before the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As one of the five nuclear-weapon States, China has long made such commitments. Today, major changes have taken place in the international situation and in the relations between nuclear-weapon States. We would like to hear from other nuclear-weapon States their underlying reasons and considerations for still insisting on the first use of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon States are duty-bound to

undertake unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. After the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — which means that the vast number of non-nuclear-weapon States have undertaken the legal obligation to forgo forever the option of acquiring nuclear weapons — non-nuclear-weapon States have all the more reason to demand that the nuclear-weapon States undertake such a commitment in a legally binding form. Such a demand is not only reasonable but just.

Those States that have nuclear weapons deployed overseas should withdraw them completely. The nuclear-weapon States can and should do this before the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. The deployment of nuclear weapons in the territories of other countries, for whatever reason and in whatever form, is tantamount to nuclear proliferation. It not only jeopardizes the peace and security of the host countries and the regions they are in but also runs counter to the non-proliferation efforts of the international community, including the relevant nuclear-weapon States themselves, which claim to be the champions of nuclear non-proliferation. These countries should immediately withdraw all their nuclear weapons from other countries. China has never deployed any nuclear weapons outside its territory.

All nuclear-weapon States should commit themselves to supporting the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, respect the nuclear-weapon-free status of such zones and undertake the corresponding obligations. This will not only be conducive to non-proliferation but is also bound to have a positive effect on the process of nuclear disarmament. The Chinese Government has always respected and supported the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States to establish, through voluntary consultations, nuclear-weapon-free zones in the light of their regions' specific conditions.

In April 1995, the Chinese Government, by way of a national statement, solemnly reiterated its position that at no time and under no circumstances would it be the first to use nuclear weapons, or to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. On this basis, China has positively responded to the initiatives of the non-nuclear-weapon States on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. China has signed and ratified Protocols I and II to both the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty of Rarotonga, and it supports the efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. China is prepared to sign the relevant Protocol to the Treaty, once the States parties to the Treaty solve in an equitable manner the issue of geographic delineation, which is of concern to China.

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that 160 States have signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and that 64 of them have deposited their instruments of ratification. The Convention can be expected to enter into force soon. China is of the view that the key to the realization of the objective and purpose of the Convention lies in its implementation. Existing chemical weapons and their production facilities should be destroyed as soon as possible. States that have abandoned chemical weapons in other countries should earnestly and swiftly resolve the matter in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

The Chinese delegation expresses its appreciation at the progress made since 1993 in the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We once again call upon all relevant parties to manifest the requisite political will and flexibility in the Preparatory Commission so that the major remaining issues concerning abandoned chemical weapons, challenge inspections and article XI can be properly resolved before the entry into force of the Convention.

To many countries, especially those that have a long land border, landmines remain an effective weapon of self-defence. All States are entitled under the United Nations Charter to use legitimate military means to endure their own security. The Chinese people have not forgotten how landmines wreaked havoc on the invaders (during the eight long years of war against the invasion of Japanese fascists), thus playing an important role in China's triumph in the war. A film depicting that part of history, entitled *Landmine Warfare*, is very popular in China and is loved by all the Chinese people.

At the same time, the Chinese Government and people have always taken seriously humanitarian concerns regarding landmines. We support the humanitarian efforts of the international community aimed at preventing the indiscriminate killing and maiming of innocent civilians by landmines and agree that reasonable and appropriate restrictions should be applied to the use of landmines, in particular anti-personnel landmines. We actively participated in the amendment of the Protocol on Prohibition or Restriction on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, and contributed our share to this process. In April 1996, the Chinese Government solemnly declared that

China would refrain from exporting anti-personnel landmines that do not meet the technical requirements of the amended Protocol, even before its entry into force. We are of the view that in resolving the landmine issue, a proper balance should be struck between humanitarian concerns and the legitimate needs of self-defence of sovereign States. The correct way to prevent landmines from harming innocent people should be to restrict, in an appropriate and reasonable manner, the use of landmines and strictly prohibit their indiscriminate use. The proposal to ban all anti-personnel landmines is unjustified, since it is an assumption based on an over-exaggeration of humanitarian concerns and total disregard for the specific situations of other countries and for the military utility of landmines. We cannot agree with it.

Since the amended Protocol has already includes some important, reasonable and meaningful restrictions on the use of landmines, in particular anti-personnel landmines, our priority task should be the universal adherence to the amended Protocol. At the same time, more attention should be paid and more technical assistance provided to demining activities, so as to enable the people of war-torn countries to return to their homeland and be reintegrated into society as soon as possible. China will seriously, responsibly and comprehensively review the amended Protocol and consider its ratification. We will also continue to provide the necessary assistance to the demining activities of other countries.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, China has earnestly and comprehensively carried out all its obligations under the Convention and has every year submitted to the United Nations the relevant information, as required by the confidence-building measures of the Convention. At present, the States parties to the Convention are working to enhance its effectiveness. In view of the special features of biological weapons and the complicated technical factors involved, efforts should be made to realistically formulate relevant definitions, criteria and lists; clearly delineate activities prohibited and permitted under the Convention; and, on this basis, explore effective and feasible verification measures, together with measures aimed at preventing abuse, protecting commercial secrets and reducing unnecessary interference in normal scientific research and industrial activities. China participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Group in a constructive and responsible manner. We are willing to continue to work closely with other States parties to enhance the effectiveness of the Convention.

At a time when progress has been and is still being made in the field of international arms control and disarmament, some new issues have emerged that are presenting us with serious challenges. These issues, if not dealt with properly and in a timely manner, will not only lead to the loss of gains already achieved in arms control and disarmament but also provoke a new arms race, which no one wants.

The so-called Theatre Missile Defence System (TMD), which certain countries are going all out to develop, will possess the capacity to intercept strategic missiles, thus going beyond the limits imposed by the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and rendering the Treaty virtually meaningless. The development of such a system will constitute an impediment to the further reduction of nuclear weapons by the major nuclear Powers, renew the arms race and destabilize the global strategic equilibrium. It will also inevitably raise concerns among other countries and dampen their enthusiasm to participate in the global process of arms control and disarmament. In addition, the so-called cooperation among certain countries in the development of TMD systems will also lead to the proliferation of advanced missile systems and related technologies, thus posing a threat to regional and even global security and stability. In short, there is nothing to gain and everything to lose from the development of the TMD system. We urge the countries concerned to cease immediately research on, and the development and deployment of, this system. We urge them not to go any further down this dangerous path.

We are faced with both opportunities and challenges in the field of international arms control and disarmament. History has bestowed on us the glorious mission to pursue disarmament for the maintenance of peace and security and for development. China is willing to work with all peace-loving and just countries and people for the attainment of this goal.

**Mr. Bune** (Fiji): At the outset, Sir, let me add my delegation's warm congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. We wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success.

Total and complete nuclear disarmament is now an international imperative, and general disarmament a challenge that collectively and individually, we must grapple with and resolve quickly in the interest of peace and security in our world.

A major feature of our international system over the centuries has been a balance of power. In the wake of the

Second World War, we saw the world polarized between two super-Powers; each sought in its own way and using its own strategy to maintain an equitable balance of power at worst, or to swing the balance its way at best. The balance of power system became more acute later with the development of nuclear armaments. The balance of conventional power became integrated with the nuclear feature, and each super-Power sought to produce a wider variety of more powerful nuclear weapons to give it additional weight in the balance. To some extent, the conventional balance shifted to a nuclear balance; this became known as the balance of terror.

The situation that prevailed then and that created the elements for a balance of power system based on nuclear armament capability no longer exists. There is now only one super-Power in the global power structure. The complement of nuclear armaments as a circumscription of the traditional balance of power is therefore no longer relevant on our planet today, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons would rid the world of a serious menace to our very existence.

The antagonisms and conflicts that exist in our world are not global in form or scale. In fact, in the last 10 years the antagonisms and conflicts that have taken place in many parts of the world have been internal and regional, and have been contained by the international community without the use of nuclear weaponry. In fact, I dare say that all could have been resolved in a comprehensive and lasting way if there had been a greater will to do so by the super-Power and the other great Powers on the one hand, and the parties to the conflict on the other — and with the United Nations as catalyst.

The antagonisms and conflicts that exist in our world are surfacing more and more within countries themselves, based on internal political, economic and social problems which nonetheless may constitute threats to peace and security. The use of nuclear weapons is not a solution to such conflicts. The vast sums of money spent by nuclear nations to bankroll the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons, if spent internally to resolve internal political, economic and social problems, would enhance development and growth and lessen conflicts and tensions. An energized United Nations system, a Security Council founded on universality, and a system of preventive diplomacy would constitute a valid replacement for nuclear armaments.

My delegation therefore urges the nuclear nations of the world to begin negotiations for an international treaty to halt and prohibit, with acceptable verification, the development and production of all nuclear weapons. This is the second logical step following the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we suggest a realistic time-frame to negotiate and conclude such a treaty.

My delegation further urges the international community to begin negotiations for an international treaty to destroy all stockpiles and arsenals of nuclear weapons, with acceptable verification, and thereby rid the world, once and for all, of nuclear weapons. We suggest that the negotiations for such a Treaty should commence immediately after the adoption of a nuclear weapons non-development, non-production treaty. With such a commitment and action, those countries which did not support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would be encouraged to do so.

It is a disgrace that in today's civilized world, anti-personnel landmines should be part of the armaments of countries. My country wishes to associate itself with the international call immediately to begin negotiations on an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Furthermore, my country recommends that the United Nations consider the formulation and implementation of an international demining programme. Thousands of innocent children are dying tragically as a result of such mines, yet we have committed ourselves to protecting the world's children.

It is a sad reflection on our community of nations that after the concerted efforts pursued and the breakthrough achieved in negotiating the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Convention has still not come into force. The reality is that the Convention is meaningless unless the United States and the Russian Federation ratify it. My country therefore calls on the United States and the Russian Federation to take steps to ratify the Convention as quickly as possible.

Similarly, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, known as the Biological Weapons Convention, is still without teeth. A Review Conference will soon be held, and my country calls upon all States parties to the Convention to give meaning to the Convention by finalizing the arrangements for a verification protocol. We must give the

Convention the means to strengthen compliance, such as on-site inspection.

The production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons constitutes a serious threat to our efforts for total and complete nuclear disarmament. We call on the international community to commence negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile materials.

At the same time, the international community should take immediate steps to prevent and deter illegal trafficking in nuclear materials. Such trafficking is possible and profitable only because there are willing buyers.

We in the South Pacific region are greatly concerned over reported plans afoot by certain unscrupulous nuclear waste dealers to use the Palmyra Islands and certain other sites in the Pacific as permanent disposal facilities for nuclear waste. We consider such proposals to be a threat to our security, and especially to the ecology, food and health of our region.

We must seek to reduce the arsenals of conventional weapons of mass destruction. The heavy trade in arms and the massive national expenditures on arms are generating a new kind of arms race, the results of which we are witnessing in many conflicts in our world.

My country will welcome the convening of another special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Nuclear and general disarmament are sine qua non conditions for lasting peace and security in our world. Let us all act together now to foster total nuclear disarmament and general disarmament.

*The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.*